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FACILITIES AND SERVICES OF NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE
U.S. Department of
Health, Education,
and Welfare, Public
Health Service
Bethesda, Md

Facilities and Services of the National Library of Medicine

FRANK B. ROGERS, M.D., DIRECTOR

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National Library of Medicine photo

A SIGN BESIDE THE DOOR of the old red brick building at the corner of Seventh Street and Independence Avenue in Washington next to the Smithsonian Institution identifies the edifice as the National Library of Medicine. But, as a famous librarian once said, "This is not the library; the library is inside."

Inside are a million books, a staff of over 200 people, hundreds of trays of 3 x 5 cards, and an impressive array of gadgets, large and small, from continuous-flow xerographic reproducers and sophisticated automatic cameras to electric erasers and wipe-on stencil addressing devices. These are not the library, either, but it is necessary to consider them in some detail if we are to discern the lineaments of the total organization.

Over a period of the century and a quarter since its founding, the National Library of Medicine (which used to be called the Armed Forces Medical Library, earlier the Army Medical Library, and still earlier the Library of the Surgeon General's Office of the U. S. Army) has amassed a collection of 250,000 bound serial volumes, 240,000 books, 280,000 theses, 160,000 pamphlets, 2,000 reels of microfilm, and 54,000 portraits and pictures. Despite a weeding program to eliminate out-of-scope materials, which for over a decade has proceeded at a 4,000-volume-a-year clip, the collection is showing a net gain of 20,000 volumes every year.

The books are of all times and places, and in all of the languages of the publishing world. The great historical collection of the Library contains 35,000 volumes which were printed before the end of the eighteenth century, and manuscripts in Latin, Arabic, Persian, Singhalese and other Eastern tongues, dating from the eleventh century. The collection also contains the latest issues of

medical journals from presses across Europe to the Urals, from the Chinese mainland, from Africa, from the islands of the far Pacific, and from all the Americas. More than 13,000 current medical serial titles are being received, of which more than 5,000 may properly be described as journals in the usual sense of that word.

All of the material coming into the Library must be cataloged, indexed, or otherwise organized for availability for use. Here the National Library of Medicine faces special problems, beyond those of volume and of language complexity. The NLM is a national library; it has national responsibilities. To reach NLM's primary audience it is necessary to resort frequently to the use of the printing press. It is characteristic of a national library that it prints its catalogs, indexes, and bibliographies so that its nation-wide clientele may be informed of the resources available.

Publication of bibliographic keys to medical literature is traditional at the National Library of Medicine; the Library's great founder, John Shaw Billings, began publication of the *Index Medicus* in 1879, and it has been continued, in various forms, to the present.

The National Library of Medicine publishes the *Index Medicus,** formerly the *Current List of Medical Literature,* monthly. The new *Index Medicus* enjoys a circulation of about 6,000. It lists by subject and author some 110,000 medical articles annually; within three years the coverage will be raised to 150,000 articles. The index is put together by new and ingenious means, employing tape-operated typewriters, mechanical collators and sorters, and a high-speed step camera which photographs entries on a strip of film directly utilizable in making the printer's plates. Use of the new system also makes possible rapid cumulation of the year's indexing output, to be published by the American Medical Association under the title *Cumulated Index Medicus.*

For books, as distinguished from the journal articles covered by the *Index Medicus,* the National Library of Medicine offers its annual published *Catalog.* The 1958 issue of the *Catalog* contained 2,272 author entries and 33,075 subject entries in 1,031 pages. The 1959 *Catalog,* now in press, will be the second quinquennial cumulation to be published. Like its predecessor of 1954, it will appear in six volumes and about 4,500 pages; the set will be sold for $60 f.o.b. Washington.**

In addition to these major publications, the National Library of Medicine

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*Annual subscription $20 from Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C.

**Available from Judd & Detwiler, 1500 Eckington Place, N. E., Washington, D. C.

brings out many smaller but none-the-less important bibliographies. Two of these appear regularly at annual intervals: one is the *Bibliography of Medical Reviews* (available from the Superintendent of Documents for $1.50), which lists separately by subject the important review literature of medicine, and the other is the *Film Reference Guide for Medicine and Allied Sciences* (available from the Superintendent of Documents for $1.00), which the Library issues on behalf of the Interdepartmental Committee on Medical Training Aids, made up of representatives of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Public Health Service, and Veterans Administration.

The output of special published bibliographies during the fiscal year 1959 may be cited as typical. During this period the Library issued the following:

Guide to Russian Medical Literature

(Public Health Service Publication No. 602)

A 90-page guide explaining how to use existing bibliographic tools to find medical works in the Russian language, where they may be obtained, and sources of translations. *For sale by Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D.C., 40 cents.*

Bibliography of Space Medicine

(Public Health Service Publication No. 617)

A subject listing of some 400 articles dealing with zero gravity, sealed-cabin ecology, acceleration forces, and other problems of the field. *Free.*

Psychopharmaca

(Public Health Service Publication No. 581)

A bibliography of psychopharmacology (tranquilizers, psychic energizers, hallucinogens, etc.); some 2,000 articles are listed under drug name and action, representing the five-year development of this field through 1957. *For sale by Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D. C., $1.50.*

Fungus Infections

A selective bibliography of almost 1,000 articles covering the literature of 1952 through September 1958. *Free.*

Bibliography of Military Psychiatry

(Public Health Service Publication No. 693)

This work completes the separate listing of articles on the subject which have appeared since the end of World War II. *For sale by Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D. C., 50 cents.*

The Library has a staff of reference librarians to assist in the exploitation of resources. This staff answers 10,000 reference questions every year, during the course of which over 300 bibliographies of some length are compiled. The

National Library of Medicine photo

ARCHITECT'S SKETCH of new building for National Library of Medicine, in Bethesda, Maryland, expected to be ready for occupancy next summer.

questions are enormously varied. They may be on the stilbamidine therapy of blastomycosis; simulation of mental illness; toxicity of organosilicon compounds; aneurysms of the cystic artery; wound healing at high altitudes; pulmonary infarction complicating mumps orchitis; changes in serum-globulin fractions in various diseases; removal of intraocular foreign bodies; relationship of personality factors to adenoma of the prostate; or kidney damage associated with aeroembolism. Or, in another vein, the Library may be asked to supply normal finger sizes to a manufacturer of surgical gloves, or methods of surgical adhesive tape manufacture. Someone asks for biographic material on the second president of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane, and another inquires about laws relating to the licensure of foreign physicians. A professor in East Africa asks about sanitary conditions in American towns during early frontier days. Attorneys ask for information on the organization of a medical clinic for group practice, for detailed information on a medical school now closed, or for the number of explosions in operating suites in a five-year period. Statistics are supplied on mental patients in Scandinavia, on the number of hospitals in Venice, and on morbidity data in the Caribbean. It is easy to understand that questions of this type test the ingenuity and experience of the staff.

Almost one-third of all reference questions coming in by mail emanate from medical schools. Others come from industry, from government agencies, and from hospitals and clinics across the land. Not all the questions are difficult; some may be answered by completing a bibliographic citation, by providing names of private translators or research workers, or by photostating existing reference lists. Some might as easily be answered by the inquirer's local medical library; the National Library of Medicine strongly encourages such local use, and strives to be a resource only, supplementing other facilities but by no means supplanting them.

The Library's photographic laboratory plays a key role in servicing requests. Over the past two years the Library has been filling more than 6,000 interlibrary loan requests per month. The great majority of these requests are filled by providing photocopy in lieu of the original; every 90 seconds of every working day throughout the year the Library completes by photographic processes one of the loan orders which will be sent to the University of Oregon, a bloodbank in Johannesburg, a hospital in Peoria, a public health office in Mississippi, or a documentation center in Mexico City. Over 10 per cent of the Library's loans are made to institutions outside the United States. In no case, however, does the National Library of Medicine loan directly to individuals; the mediation of a local library in the interlibrary loan service is a requisite.

In all these ways — through a policy of exhaustively collecting the world medical literature, through the preparation and publication of bibliographic keys to the literature which serve as basic research tools in medical libraries everywhere, and through the provision of access to the Library's great collection through reference service and a mammoth interlibrary loan operation — the National Library of Medicine strives to serve the entire medical community.

This tradition of service has been carried on for a long time, often under considerable difficulties. A new building, badly needed for many years, is nearing completion on the grounds of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, and will be ready for occupancy in 1961, in time for the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the founding of the National Library of Medicine. Besides solving desperate problems of dwindling space in the present Library building in Washington, the new building will allow the Library's great historical collections, located in Cleveland for the past two decades, to be reintegrated with the main collections.

Passage of the National Library of Medicine Act in 1956 transferred the Library from the Department of Defense to the Public Health Service of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Last year Congress appro-

priated an operating budget of $1,566,000 for the fiscal year 1960. The Library's staff, using these resources, and backed by the benevolent watchfulness of the 17-member Board of Regents appointed by the President of the United States, strives to carry out programs which will indeed, in the terms of the law, "assist the advancement of medical and related sciences and aid the dissemination and exchange of scientific and other information important to the progress of medicine and to the public health."

The new building in Bethesda will proudly bear the name of the National Library of Medicine, and will indeed symbolize the institution. But, as before, the real National Library of Medicine will remain something more than the building, the books, the people, and the dollars, basic as these may be and are. The Library lives in the fused amalgam of them all, in the functioning rather than in the existing, in the continuing striving to serve all men who do battle against disease.

Loans

What May Be Borrowed.—All printed literature in the Library's collection is available for loan, with the exception of ordinary, current, in-trade publications where the presumption of widespread accessibility elsewhere is reasonable. Requests for material in the History of Medicine Division will be examined individually.

Who May Borrow. — Only other libraries may borrow from the National Library of Medicine. Individuals may borrow through their local libraries or they may come to the Library and use the material on the premises. For qualified researchers undertaking long-term bibliographic projects at the Library, study tables in the stacks will be made available, insofar as facilities permit, on application to the Head of the Loan and Stack Section.

Form of Loans. — Material in the Library will be loaned in the original form or in photocopy (microfilm or photoprints). The National Library of Medicine reserves the right to determine in which form the loan will be made, taking into consideration costs of photocopying, copyright restrictions, rarity of the item requested, its physical condition, the frequency of use of the item, shipping costs, and any other points which seem pertinent. In general, requests for periodical articles will be filled with photocopy since original volumes of journals do not leave the Library. While loan service is international, normally loans to libraries outside the continental United States will be made in the form of photocopies only.

Special Photographic Services

Pictorial Works, and Facsimile Copying.—Works such as portraits, photographs, etchings, and caricatures which are part of the Library's collections will not be loaned outside the Library. Whenever (a) copies of such works, or (b) facsimile photocopies, in positive copy, or to exact size of the original, or (c) enlarged copies, as for exhibit or other purposes, are required, photographic copies can be furnished on a reimbursable

basis; cost estimates for such work will be provided on request. Requests of this kind received from agencies of the Federal Government, when accompanied by adequate justification, will be filled free of charge.

Reference Service

Reference librarians are available to help those who come to the Library. Questions which require brief search will be answered by telephone. Bibliographic searches on specific subjects will be undertaken, as the Library's facilities permit, in response to written requests from those who have exhausted the resources of their local libraries. Requests for bibliographic searches may be made by other libraries or by individuals and should state (1) the subject, defined in considerable detail, with delineation of any special aspects which are of particular interest; (2) the years to be covered; (3) the languages to be included, and (4) the sources already examined. It is also helpful to the bibliographer to know in detail the purpose for which the bibliography is to be used. Request blanks for the bibliographic services are available. Information about existing bibliographies will also be supplied.

A list of available bibliographies prepared by the National Library of Medicine is available upon request.

Translators and Research Workers

The Library does not provide translating service but will attempt to locate existing translations or abstracts. It maintains a register of translators and research workers with whom private arrangements can be made. The Library cannot take responsibility for the work of the people on its register, nor is it always able to supply information about their charges.

History of Medicine Division

The Library's collection of monographs (except theses and certain pamphlets) published before 1801, together with material relating to them, is located at its History of Medicine Division, 11,000 Euclid Avenue at Adelbert Road, Cleveland 6, Ohio.

Special rules pertain to the use of material in this Division and correspondence on it should be addressed directly to the Division in Cleveland.

Art Section

The Art Section of the Library contains a wide range of woodcuts, etchings, caricatures, fine engravings, oil portraits, photographs, and other nonclinical illustrations relating to medicine and the allied sciences. Reproductions (prints and copy negatives) of pictorial items in the collections, including lantern slides, are available at nominal cost. Orders should be submitted directly to the Head of the Art Section.

Medical Motion Picture Collection

The National Library of Medicine has established an archival collection of documentary medical motion pictures for reference and research purposes. The collection is being built by means of donation and consists chiefly of obsolete films of historical interest. The collection does not circulate, but films may be viewed in the Library.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE
U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service
Bethesda, Md.

Gaylord
PAMPHLET BINDER
Syracuse, N. Y.
Stockton, Calif.